

July 7, 2010

Margaret M. Fox

pfox@mcnair.net
T (803) 799-9800
F (803) 753-3219

Via Electronic Filing

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

Re: Written Ex Parte Communication
A National Broadband Plan for our Future
GN Docket No. 09-51

Dear Ms. Dortch:

In accordance with the Commission's Rules, 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206, attached please find a letter that was sent today on behalf of the South Carolina Telephone Coalition.

We are electronically filing this notice using the Commission's Electronic Filing System for inclusion in the above-referenced docket.

Very truly yours,

McNAIR LAW FIRM, P.A.



Margaret M. Fox

MMF:rwm
Attachment

McNair Law Firm, P. A.
1221 Main Street
Suite 1600
Columbia, SC 29201

Mailing Address
Post Office Box 11390
Columbia, SC 29211

mcnair.net

SOUTH CAROLINA TELEPHONE COALITION

Post Office Box 11390
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

July 7, 2010

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner
United States Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *A National Broadband Plan for Our Future*
GN Docket No. 09-51

Dear Commissioner Clyburn:

We, the undersigned members of the South Carolina Telephone Coalition, write you as long-term beneficiaries of your concern for the underrepresented rural areas of South Carolina. Throughout your years as Commissioner on the South Carolina Public Service Commission, we have worked with you hand-in-hand to address the concerns for those often overlooked.

Congress has required the FCC to ensure that a foundation is laid for our nation to create a ubiquitously available broadband network. To achieve this Congressional mandate, Chairman Julius Genachowski has assembled a skilled, dedicated group of professionals who have produced the National Broadband Plan, a document that is intended to guide the nation into being a true world leader in all aspects related to broadband.

While the plan has many laudable aspects, unfortunately the unique needs of rural Americans have been misunderstood and overlooked in the development of this plan. Those unique needs were summarized and addressed in the recent report entitled "Bringing Broadband to Rural America: Report on a Rural Broadband Strategy," issued by then-Acting Chairman Michael J. Copps on May 22, 2009. The National Broadband Plan appears to ignore the observations made in the report and the significant efforts that have already been made and continue to be made by rural carriers in deploying broadband in rural areas to meet the needs of rural consumers. In doing so, the National Broadband Plan completely misses the mark. In particular, there are three major shortcomings of the National Broadband Plan that we would like to bring to your attention.

First and foremost, the plan abandons 75 years of public policy requiring comparable service in rural America. It has long been recognized that high-speed broadband opens

doors of opportunity that should be available to citizens in rural as well as urban areas.¹ Contrary to this long-standing goal, the plan condemns rural Americans to second class citizenship, with broadband speeds 25 times slower than what would be available to the average American. In doing so, the Plan would impede economic development in rural areas by deterring businesses from locating or expanding there, and driving new and existing businesses toward urban areas that have available broadband speeds to meet their needs. This would exacerbate the already dire employment prospects faced by many rural residents of South Carolina and similar states that have large rural populations and high unemployment.

Next, the plan fails to fully address the recovery of investments made by service providers over the years. In effect, the FCC is unilaterally reneging on the long-standing policy that has allowed most of rural American to enjoy both quality voice service and first generation broadband. It is crucial that the FCC recognize that it is not starting from scratch, and that many of the technologies and resources needed for rural broadband exist today.² In fact, as you know, South Carolina rural carriers in particular have done a tremendous job not only of deploying broadband networks to the vast majority of rural consumers in South Carolina, but in providing cutting-edge technology and broadband speeds to their customers, and in continuing to provide innovative services and options in the rural areas of South Carolina that they serve. The National Broadband Plan's disregard for the recovery of investments already made will not only hinder future investments by rural broadband service providers, but will jeopardize the financial viability of companies that have already made substantial investments in infrastructure over the years based on current recovery mechanisms.

Third and most ironic, the plan creates such uncertainty over future funding that it is freezing companies' ability to continue to deploy broadband in rural America. Investors demand returns that are commensurate with investment risk. Rather than assuring lenders that investments made in rural broadband networks today are worth the risk, the plan creates such a high level of uncertainty that lenders are unwilling to invest at all. Thus, the very plan intended to stimulate broadband deployment in effect hinders it instead.

While we trust it was not the intent of the FCC to bring about these consequences in adopting a National Broadband Plan, without the strong voice of a rural advocate such as yourself, they will nevertheless occur. It is fortunate that in this time of great need, we have a representative on the FCC who has dedicated her career to representing the unrepresented.

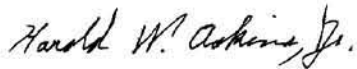
¹ See, e.g., Copps Report at para. 2.

² See Copps Report at para. 10.

We respectfully request that you consider our grave concerns as you and your staff continue to evaluate the National Broadband Plan. As we have done often and so successfully back home in South Carolina, we look forward to working with you in Washington to find solutions. We are convinced there are ways to remedy these and other difficulties in the plan, and with your leadership we are confident this will be done.

Respectfully submitted:

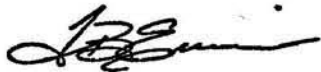
South Carolina Telephone Coalition:



Harold W. Askins, Jr., Chief Executive Officer
Chesnee Telephone Company



J. Brian Singleton, President and Chief Executive Officer
Chester Telephone Company
Lockhart Telephone Company
Ridgeway Telephone Company



F. Bradley Erwin, Chief Executive Officer
Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Inc.



Bryant G. Barnes, President and Chief Executive Officer
Ft. Mill Telephone Company,
Lancaster Telephone Company,
PBT Telecom, Inc.,
Rock Hill Telephone Company, all d/b/a Comporium Communications

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn
July 7, 2010
Page 4



William S. Helmly, President
Home Telephone Company, Inc.



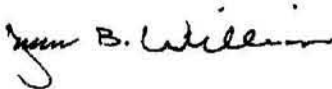
Mike Hagg, Chief Executive Officer
Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc.



Jason J. Dandridge, Chief Executive Officer
Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.



William A. Griswold, Chief Executive Officer
Piedmont Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.



Irvin B. Williams, CEO/Manager
Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn
July 7, 2010
Page 5

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. J. Herron', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David J. Herron, CEO/General Manager
West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

cc: Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell
Commissioner Meredith Atwell Baker
Sharon Gillett, Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau